THE

RAGGED SCHOOL UNION

Magazine.

MAY, 1850.

Original Papers.

THE MORNING CHRONICLE *versus* RAGGED SCHOOLS.

The chief obstacles against which the promoters of Ragged Schools had originally to contend, were the rough and almost untameable nature of their pupils, and the cold scepticism of public opinion. Many were the patient and unseen struggles which these occasioned, uncheered by the sympathies of men, or the prospect of speedy success. It was a work that faith and love could alone undertake, or prosecute with such a degree of energy as would insure even the faintest promise. They felt that—laugh as the world might—it was no mere phantom they were pursuing—no visionary object they sought to accomplish. It was full of solemn and stern realities, both in regard to the disease and the remedy. It was a work in which neither fanatics nor formalists could ever engage, for its originating and sustaining elements were high-toned principle and living faith—faith in the transforming power of the grace of God, and the exhibition of his own love in the Gospel of Christ. It was in this their hopes rested: nor was it merely in theory, for they had seen the evidences of its power among the heathen abroad, and they believed that, among the rough and untutored outcasts at home, it would also prove "mighty, through God, to the pulling down of the strongholds" of depravity and sin. It was not merely with pens and primers they went down into the dark purlieus of misery and guilt, as if these could strike light into benighted minds, or break the fetters of sin-bound captives; but they carried with them the Gospel—that only charter of human freedom—the only lever capable of elevating the morally depraved. The Ragged School movement, therefore, is essentially a religious one; for whatever appliances of a secular or temporal cha-

racter it may embrace—thereby showing that "godliness is profitable for all things"—yet, deprive it of the religious element, and it becomes impotent and visionary. Hence, many mistook its nature at the outset, and some misunderstand it still.

The last two years, however, have been full of promise. An increase of Schools, of labourers, and of the Society's funds, together with many pleasing evidences of successful labour, did more than repay the previous years of unrequited toil. An almost universal recognition of its importance and adaptation, gave strong hopes of speedy progress. Christian philanthropists at last consented to admit it within the circle of their friends, and honour it with a portion of their bounty.

But it sometimes occurred to her more experienced guides, that our goodly ship—now mounted with more than seventy-five guns—would not always sail on an undisturbed sea. And so it has proved. A "coaster," with a superabundance of ammunition of its kind, has lately appeared alongside of her, and made an attack, as fierce as it was unexpected. It assumed at first a most friendly attitude, and no suspicions were felt until the first gun was fired. Even that might have passed as a simple recognition, had it not been speedily followed by a second, and then by a third, which seemed of still more mighty dimensions. Those of us on board were not a little surprised at the sudden attack of our unsuspected neighbour; but greater was our consternation, when we found ourselves assailed as a gang of pirates, deserving of death and speedy destruction; not merely engaged in plunder ourselves, but spending the very "guineas" we procured, in the manufacture of young thieves and robbers, who might soon excel us in the unholy traffic! After the "reports" had somewhat abated, in strange bewilderment, we began to look around for the tattered sails and broken timbers, but the ammunition of our assailants had proved so completely counterfeit, that the damage was most seriously felt by those for whom it was least intended.

But to speak more plainly. The *Morning Chronicle*, professedly engaged in promoting the interests of the poor, has lately made a fierce and insiduous attack on the Ragged Schools, and their foster-parent the *Union*, through its Special Correspondent, Mr. Mayhew. That gentleman has been employed for the last few months in furnishing a series of letters on "Labour and the Poor." All at once—for reasons known to himself, and perhaps also to us—he set aside his other investigations, and directed his attention to the London Ragged Schools. They are described by him as institutions established for the reclamation of juvenile offenders, and hence their utility must be tested by the criminal returns of the metropolis. In these balances they are weighed and found wanting. By a formidable array of statistical tables, he shows that, for some years prior to the establishment of Ragged Schools, the number of juvenile offenders in the metropolis had rapidly decreased, but during the five years succeeding the formation of the Ragged School Union, the numbers had as rapidly increased as they had previously declined. Hence, Ragged Schools have been the cause. That our readers may see more clearly

the nature of the charges brought against us, we give one or two extracts from the letters in question. The following table has been prominently exhibited, as placing the matter beyond dispute:—

Increase of Ragged Schools in the Metropolis since 1844.					Increase of Juvenile Offenders in the Metropolis since 1844.	
Year.	Schools.	Teachers.	Children.	Amount Collected.	Number of Juvenile Offenders taken into custody.	Number of Population under 20 to 1 Juvenile Offender.
1844	20	200	2,000	£61 0 0	13,600	One in 56
1845	26	250	2,600	320 0 0	15,128	„ 51
1846	44	454	4,776	824 6 10	15,552	„ 50
1847	62	902	12,823	1,174 4 1	15,698	„ 50
1848	82	1,053	17,249	4,142 16 8	16,917	„ 47

"Hence it appears, that the increase in the number of Ragged Schools throughout the metropolis, since 1844, has been 62; of Ragged School Teachers, 853; of Ragged School pupils, 15,249; and of Ragged School funds, upwards of £4,000. And yet, in spite of all this vast educational machinery, the number of offenders under twenty years of age has increased in the same period no less than 3,317—or very nearly one for each guinea that had been subscribed in the hope of diminishing juvenile depravity."

It is then shown, that, besides increasing the number of offenders, the only perceptible effects produced by Ragged Schools is an increase of the partially educated class. Hence, we are not only increasing the number of juvenile offenders, but, by "a sort of slip-slop education," we are quickening their intellects, and increasing their powers for mischief. The manner in which we are said to increase the number of offenders is, by congregating so many young thieves together, where the bad are allowed to corrupt the less vicious, and lead them into thievish practices. This is proved from the statements of several policemen—a number of children who had attended the schools—and several other unknown parties, whose names or occupations are not given. As specimens of the evidence thus furnished, we give the following extracts:—A Ragged School boy says, "There were forty or fifty boys at the Ragged School; half of them were thieves, and we used to go thieving in gangs of six; when we were away from school we went thieving; we taught any new boy to thieve, making parties to do it."

Another says, "I shouldn't have been a thief but for the Ragged School—I know I shouldn't."

A policeman says, "I have seen many boys in school whom I have known in custody for felony, and others whom I have seen in prison. On leaving school, their behaviour is very disorderly; you can hear them half a mile off; they never seem to have benefited by the excellent things they have heard." Lengthened details are furnished of a similar nature, from which the writer draws the conclusion, that the schools "must be productive of far more injury than benefit to the community," and that "they may be thieves' houses of refuge, but

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they are also thieves' houses of call." This he calls a new discovery, (we agree with him,) and for which he claims the gratitude of the Ragged School teachers!

After the appearance of the second letter, the following brief reply was sent by the Noble Chairman of the Union:—

To the Editor of the Morning Chronicle.

SIR,—The letter from your Metropolitan Correspondent, in your paper of yesterday, contains some very serious reflections on the value and efficacy of Ragged Schools.

Nothing but the long and deep interest I have felt in the success of these efforts to alleviate a mighty evil, would have induced me to request a place in your columns for two or three observations.

The objectors to Ragged Schools demand much more from them than ever was demanded by their advocates. We have never regarded them but as palliatives of a terrible and pressing mischief—as experiments to try what can be done—as efforts to manifest our sympathy rather than our power. We say that the good that they have effected cannot be stated in tables and figures. It consists more in the prevention of what would otherwise have been enormous, than in the positive and palpable advancement of good over evil. We appeal to every one with the slightest knowledge of London, to state what would have been the present condition of the metropolis had not these efforts been called in operation.

The scheme, besides, of Ragged Schools is incomplete without an accompanying scheme of Emigration. Wherever this has been effected, our success has far surpassed our hopes; and hundreds, now in her Majesty's colonies, testify, by their condition and conduct, that, however low and miserable in their former lives, they are far from irreclaimable.

That many should be obdurate—that many should return to their former courses, and disappoint the hopes of their best friends, is incidental to all schools, and is almost inevitably the lot of our ragged establishments. The children come for daily instruction from scenes of vice, filth, and destitution nearly unparalleled, and return to them every evening. They are beset by every temptation that appetite, want of employment, and necessity, can suggest; and distress and suffering threaten every moment of their existence. Many fall away, no doubt; but this only confirms what I have ever ventured to assert, that so long as our population is permitted to continue in its present state—in its courts, alleys, and overcrowded dwellings, as rife with disgusting immorality as with disease—all effort at education is nearly vain: the work of months is undone in an hour.

It is a consolation, however, to those who have laboured, that not a few have been saved from sin and wretchedness; and they feel the rescue of but one to be so blessed a result, that they will neither shrink from the toil, nor quail under any discouragement.

I am, Sir, your very obedient servant,

March 26, 1850. ASHLEY.

In addition to the above, the following letter, entering more into the details of the statements, appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*, on the 22nd of April:—

To the Editor of the Morning Chronicle.

SIR,—I shall feel greatly obliged if, in the columns of *The Morning Chronicle*, you can favour me with an early insertion of the accompanying reply to the statements of your Correspondent respecting Ragged Schools.

You will perceive that our opinions upon the subject differ very widely, and hence some of us must be in error. If I am the erring party, I shall be glad to see my opinions disproved, and my statements corrected. But, as the matter now stands, convinced as I am that my views are correct, I feel that, in justice to the Society, the children of the poor, and also the *Morning Chronicle*, I ought to place them before the public, however imperfectly expressed.

As it is likely to be the only instance when the insertion of any such statement will be required on behalf of the Society, I trust you will be kind enough to give it publicity through the same medium as those of your Correspondent. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

ALEXANDER ANDERSON.

Ragged School Union, 15, *Exeter Hall*,
April 16, 1850.

To the Editor of the Morning Chronicle.

SIR,—As the statements of your Special Correspondent, respecting the London Ragged Schools, may tend in some measure to mislead those who are not practically conversant with the subject, I beg to reply, through the medium of your pages, to some of his assertions. I had not intended to do this until very lately, which may account for the time that has elapsed since the letters of your Correspondent appeared.

As those statements extend over nearly fourteen columns of your paper, I may therefore be excused for occupying a greater portion of your space than I otherwise would have done. My remarks shall be chiefly confined to a few of the more prominent points on which he rests his conclusions. In doing so, I wish to be influenced by a strict regard for truth, and not by any undue respect I may have for the institutions in question.

In your leading article on the subject, on the 1st inst., you say to the Promoters and Superintendents of Ragged Schools—"Persevere." In reply to this, we say—*No;* we cannot persevere if the statements of your Correspondent are true. We are not the mere slaves of a maudlin sentimentality. We have neither time, nor money, nor energies, to expend in efforts worse than useless. We love too much our homes, our country, and our God, to waste the contributions of our Christian brethren, in the propagation of criminality and vice, and the degradation of the children of our honest poor. Hence we say, if Ragged Schools are what your Correspondent has represented them to be—for the sake of our beloved country, and all that is dear to us, as men and citizens, let him have the credit of their speedy annihilation. But he will have to show a more practical acquaintance with the subject, and adduce facts of a more satisfactory nature, before he gains the unenviable honour.

The first error into which he seems to have fallen is, respecting the object for which the Schools were established. They were not *expressly* intended for the reformation of juvenile offenders, and hence, with several columns of statistical tables, he tests their merits by a wrong standard. They were established—as the name implies—for the education of children "who are too poor, too filthy, and too ragged, to be admitted into ordinary schools;" and although a portion of the criminal class have attended them, in a majority of cases they are the exception, not the rule. This may be distinctly understood from the printed documents of the Society, with which your Correspondent was furnished. In our labours, we embrace a much wider sphere than he has assigned us, unless he can prove that *all* ragged children belong to the criminal class. Of that class, however, we can point to many cases of decided reformation—and to many others, who, but for those Schools, would have been added to the list of criminals. Hence, frequent allusion is made to that feature of the subject; but in

most of the Schools, the criminal class forms a small minority. Our object is to *prevent*, rather than to *cure*. Hence, he may be able to understand why it is, that we do not test the utility of the Schools by the increase or decrease of our prison population, or spend our time and limited means in furnishing the public with "information upon the subject of the amount of juvenile crime, in the different districts of London."

But, if their efficiency *is* to be tested by such a criterion, let it be done honourably and fairly. Let due account be taken of those circumstances that materially affect the increase or decrease of crime, and over which such institutions can have no control. Your Correspondent has not done this, nor even alluded to them, although he must have been fully aware of the importance of doing so. It is evident from his own tables, that the number of juvenile offenders in different years is very much affected by causes of which he takes no notice. He does not tell us, for instance, why it is that, in 1841, there was an increase of 3,800 over that of 1839, nor what caused the remarkable decrease in 1844, of 2,700 below that of 1843.

Ragged Schools may feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and reform the vicious, but they cannot prevent a railway panic, an Irish famine, or a French revolution; nor should they be made responsible for the conduct of children, who may be instigated or driven into a course of crime by such misfortunes. May not the "alarming increase" of juvenile offenders in 1848 be more reasonably ascribed to the above and similar causes, than to the operations of Ragged Schools? Is it necessary to remind him that, in 1848, the streets of the metropolis were swarming with destitute Irish, driven by famine from their own country; that, from January 1st to 31st of that year, the number of Irish applicants to the *Mendicity Society*, who had been *less* than twelve months in London, were no fewer than 18,589; and that the number of vagrants committed to the Houses of Correction at Coldbath Fields and Westminster, was 1,200 more than in 1847? Is no account to be taken of the severe privations to which very many of the working population were exposed, by the commercial panic in 1847 and 1848, to the effects of which—if I am not mistaken—your Correspondent refers in his previous articles? Is "the ever-memorable 10th of April," and the riotous meetings which occurred for several weeks before and after it, to be entirely exonerated from having any connection with this "alarming increase;" when, according to the accounts of the *Morning Chronicle*, "Scotland Yard grew pale," and the metropolis had to be guarded by "three hundred thousand men, including a formidable vanguard of regular troops?" The same authority states, that "the new recruits were for the most part young lads, filthy and ragged in their appearance," and that in others, "the insurgent patriots were dirty boys, with a sprinkling of professional thieves," and that "prigging was carried on throughout on the very largest scale that circumstances permitted." On another occasion, I find that "scenes of the most indescribable blackguardism were enacted by those wretched boys, who evidently represented the lowest scum of the metropolis, and hoped to reap a rich harvest in picking pockets;" and that, in addition to this, "a band of blackguard boys, amounting to several hundreds, and not having a full-grown man amongst them," paraded the streets until midnight, smashing in windows, and stealing where they could; and that next day "*the principal station-houses of the West End were filled with prisoners.*" May not these transactions have had more to do with the "alarming increase" of juvenile offenders in 1848, than the "guineas" subscribed to the Ragged School Union?

There is another important point, in connection with the increase of committals in 1848, to which your Correspondent makes no reference. I allude to the Larceny Act, which came into operation in August, 1847, giving to magistrates the power of committing to prison, for very short periods, children under fourteen years of age, without the intervention of

a jury. Of the effects of this Act, Mr. Serjeant Adams, in his charge to the grand jury, in 1849, says: "It is a singular fact, that the increase of committals of boys not exceeding fourteen, has been more rapid in the city than the county at large; the number in the first *six* months of the *second* year of the operation of the Act, committed by the city magistrates, amounting to within *twenty-one* to the whole number of committals in the *twelve* months preceding the enactment." He further adds, that "since the passing of this Act, persons have appeared as prosecutors against children who would otherwise have let the offence pass unpunished;" and that, "*but for this Act the committals would have continued slightly to decrease, as they have been decreasing for four or five years.*" He also states, that he believes "the Larceny Act has been a dead letter in *the agricultural districts.*"

Is it fair, I ask, to submit an Institution, so recently established, to such an ordeal as your Correspondent has done, and make unqualified statements, calculated to damage it in public estimation, while he leaves entirely out of view such circumstances as those to which I have alluded? If it does not appear like "making out a case," it less resembles an impartial inquiry.

But this is not all; "for the sake of greater perspicuity," he places the increase of juvenile offenders side by side with that of the Ragged Schools, since the formation of their Union in 1844. By "this stubborn array of facts and figures, which admits of no scepticism," he shows, that "the number of offenders, under twenty years of age, has increased in the same period to no less than 3,317, or very nearly one for each guinea that had been subscribed, in the hope of diminishing juvenile depravity." We are also informed, "that for the three years immediately preceding the establishment of the Union, there was a rapid and extensive decrease in the juvenile depravity of the metropolis." In his subsequent statements, I find that very much of this "rapid increase" he ascribes to the injurious effects of Ragged Schools.

But is it really so—that the number of juvenile offenders has increased, 3,300 during the five years the Ragged Schools have been established? Of this I am yet sceptical, however stubborn he may consider the statements he has adduced. By his own figures I discover a very considerable *decrease* during that period. I arrive at this conclusion by the same process which, in another case, he has himself adopted. I take the number of juvenile offenders for the five years succeeding the establishment of Ragged Schools, and place them side by side with that of the five years preceding. The following is the result:—

Metropolitan Juvenile Offenders.

Taken into Custody.	Number of Persons under Twenty Years, taken into Custody during the Five Years preceding the establishment of the Ragged School Union, in 1844.	Taken into Custody.	Number of Persons under Twenty Years, taken into Custody during Five Years since the establishment of the Ragged School Union, in 1844.
In 1839	13,587	In 1844	13,600
1840	14,031	1845	15,128
1841	17,425	1846	15,552
1842	16,987	1847	15,698
1843	16,316	1848	16,917
Total . . .	78,346	Total . . .	76,895
Average . .	15,669	Average . .	15,379

Thus it appears that, regardless of the increase of the population, the *average* number of juvenile offenders, during the latter period, is less than the former by 290. Surely this does not look like an alarming increase. The difference will appear still greater when the increase of the population is taken into account.

Proportion of Criminals under Twenty Years, to the Population of the Metropolis under the same Age.

Years.	Number of Persons under Twenty Years to One taken into Custody, from the Years 1839 to 1843, inclusive.	Years.	Number of Persons under Twenty Years to One taken into Custody, from the Years 1844 to 1848, inclusive.
1839	One in 53	1844	One in 56
1840	„ 52	1845	„ 51
1841	„ 42	1846	„ 50
1842	„ 44	1847	„ 50
1843	„ 46	1848	„ 47
Average . .	One in 47	Average . .	One in 50

By the above, the matter will be seen in its true character, so far as it can be seen from the returns of the last ten years. During the five years that preceded the establishment of Ragged Schools, the total number of juvenile offenders committed in the metropolis was 78,346, giving an average for each of those years of 15,669. Whereas, during the five years that succeeded the establishment of the Schools, the total number of committals was 76,895, giving an average for each year of 15,379; thus showing an average *decrease* of 290. If we attend to the proportion of juvenile offenders to the estimated increase of the population, the case will appear still more evident. It will be seen by the above tables that, during the five years *preceding* the Ragged Schools, there was, on an average, 1 youth taken into custody in every 47; and during the five years succeeding the commencement of the Schools, there has only been 1 *youth committed in every* 50. Is this the "overwhelming rate" at which "the number of juvenile offenders has been increasing year by year?" That the above is a more accurate view of the case than that given by your Correspondent, I leave the public to judge. It is difficult to understand why a gentleman so accustomed to statistical information as he seems to be, should have led the public into so palpable an error—yourself and "*John Bull*" among the rest.

In the year 1841, the number of juvenile offenders taken into custody was 17,425, being an increase over the preceding year of no less than 3,394. This unusually high number he takes as the *basis* of his calculations, and thereby shows a gradual decrease until 1844. Here an unusually *low* number occurs—less than that of 1841 by 3,825, and taking this very low number as *a new basis*, he shows, as might be expected, a gradual increase during the next four years, but certainly not an increase—as the above table shows—over the average number of juvenile offenders. And yet he tells us most coolly, that "this array of facts and figures admits of no scepticism"! We are further told, that, "notwithstanding the vast increase of scholastic machinery of late years, we are not *reforming*, but merely educating our criminals." Not one the less appears in our jails. Can he inform us how many *more would* have appeared in our

jails had it not been for this increase of educational measures? The increase is evidently not keeping pace with the increase of the population.

If it be "the creed of the day," "that a knowledge of reading and writing is the great panacea for all moral evil," we certainly were not aware of it until he told us. It is *not* the creed of the Christians of England, and *never was* the creed of the promoters of Ragged Schools. We have no faith in the mere knowledge of reading and writing, as a cure for moral evil; although we believe, that even more than that amount of knowledge ought to be imparted to every English child—but we *have* faith in the power of *moral training and religious influence*. We have strong faith in "the Gospel of the grace of God," through which our country has arisen to its present dignity, and without which, we believe, the wretched masses of our population can never be elevated. This, I fear, is one of the chief points in which your Correspondent has misunderstood us, for he is most careful in stating, that we merely teach the children to read and write. Perhaps it forms "a path, into which the eagle's eye hath not yet soared."

The second part of your Correspondent's statement goes to show, that, by "bringing so many boys of vicious propensities together," the Schools are "productive of far more injury than benefit to the community." On this subject he says: "I have been at considerable pains in collecting the evidence of the most experienced persons upon this point."

Now, Sir, I wish not to impute unworthy motives to that gentleman, nor would I question for a moment the accuracy of his statements, unless I could bring proof to the contrary. But if, when inquiring into the *value* of the evidence he has collected, I meet with contradictory statements from some of the very parties to whom he refers—questionable of his prudence or their truthfulness—the fault lies with others, not with me. One would have supposed that "the most *experienced* persons" for furnishing the information he desired, would have been parties actively connected with the Schools; those who, by years of self-sacrifice, unremunerated, had taught the children, visited them in their homes, watched them in the streets, and thus, by *actual* experience, had become acquainted with their habits and conduct. Or, if they were not sufficient, the gentlemen composing the Local Committees of the Schools, (whose names and addresses are published with every one of their Reports,) would have been the next best authority to whom he could have applied. They are generally men of business, intelligence, and respectability, who are not likely to give their time, energies, and money, for the support of institutions of which they know nothing. Many of them have property in the very localities of the Schools, which, if "nurseries for criminals," would, doubtless, make them among the first sufferers. It ought to be known that, with the view of placing him in communication with some of those very parties, Lord Ashley supplied him with some fifteen or twenty letters of introduction; but as, by his own account, he availed himself of sources of information "exterior" to the Ragged Schools, a considerable number of those letters have, doubtless, not been delivered. This scarcely appears like an unwillingness on the part of those connected with the Society, to furnish him with information.

But we are told that, because those parties do not send returns to the Society of the number of the children belonging to the Schools, "who have been taken into custody or imprisoned"—"it would have been idle for him to have sought for evidence from them, as to the danger of congregating so many young thieves together." He seems to have forgotten, that he only applied to the Society for such returns on the 27th of March, and

a very questionable part of his evidence appeared *on the 25th*. Perhaps they were not the most likely persons to furnish the *kind* of information he required. But who are the individuals who have investigated the subject so closely, and on whose testimony the public may more safely rely? Why, they are four policemen, five poor boys—two of whom are young thieves in prison—one girl, and three "experienced gentlemen," of whom we know nothing. Where those gentlemen obtained their experience "exterior" to Ragged Schools we cannot tell, and as I am prepared to meet their assertions with an unqualified contradiction—unless I am bound to prove a negative, it remains for your Correspondent to give some satisfactory proof of the value of their testimony.

Two of those gentlemen are reported to have agreed in saying, that "the Ragged Schools are in reality nurseries for criminals—houses of call for thieves; and three out of every five boys who swelled the lists of our juvenile criminals were taught roguery at a Ragged School, or had taught it there to others." Now, Sir, before any gentleman could be warranted in publishing such a statement respecting any benevolent institution, he ought to be prepared, at least, with some amount of proof in support of it. If such proofs do exist, they may be obtained; and until he, or those gentlemen, can refer to *one* prison in London, *or throughout the whole of England*, where three out of every five of its juvenile prisoners have been "taught roguery at a Ragged School, or taught it there to others," I must pronounce such a statement to be both *uncharitable and untrue*, and unworthy of the responsible position which your Correspondent occupies. If such are the random and unfounded statements retailed by the *Morning Chronicle* on "Labour and the Poor," they are certainly of less value than the public were disposed to estimate, and to the best interests of the poor must do incalculable injury.

The evidence given by the first policeman is certainly not such as could lead your Correspondent to the conclusion at which he has arrived. He can give no instance of a child having been led astray at a Ragged School. He "never knew a girl, a scholar in a Ragged School, in the streets afterwards;" and he "can't charge his memory with any particular boy or girl at the Ragged School going wrong afterwards;" but, evidently in answer to questions started, he admits the *possibility* of good children being corrupted by bad ones, which no Ragged School teacher would ever deny. The second policeman states at the outset, that of "the particular effects of Ragged Schools he has no means of describing."

Your Correspondent and he are both wrong in saying, that the decrease in the number of juvenile offenders in Westminster, in 1847 and 1848, is owing to the removal of the buildings. The only houses taken down in 1848 were those of the Almonry and New Court, Duck Lane, which, with very few exceptions, if any, were brothels, and therefore did not contain any families, as most of the rooms were hired by girls. Those occupied by families, and which alone could contain children, *were removed in* 1849. This, a majority of the inhabitants of Westminster can prove. Such removals could have no bearing upon the decrease of offenders in 1847 and 1848. Unless, therefore, your Correspondent can devise some other means of accounting for this decrease, we must be left to the conclusion, that, after all, it is owing chiefly to the "vast educational machinery" which was brought into operation about that period—to the supplanting of the thieves' training school—to the present Juvenile Refuge, which has been so fiercely assailed—and to the establishment of other Schools in the neighbourhood, at which there is now an attendance of from six hundred to seven hundred children.

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Schools. They only state, what every one knows, that the children are rough and unruly, and often make a noise in the streets. All is mere theory, except what is stated by the children who attended the Schools. From inquiries I have made respecting those children, I am forced to the conclusion, that no gentleman wishing to obtain impartial evidence would have put questions to the children in the manner your Correspondent did. I refer particularly to the two apprentices. The first questions put to them were, respecting a robbery at the school. They are next told that many of the scholars are turning out very bad—that some of them were in prison, and had been flogged—and that they were leading each other astray. Thus their minds were prepared for a number of "leading questions," respecting the associating of good and bad boys together, and by the vague answers of "yes," or "no," they are represented as saying things which they never intended. In proof of this, I give the following statement of one of the apprentices, taken in shorthand at the time, read over to him afterwards, and affirmed by him to be correct:—"The gentleman first asked me about the robbery at the School, and said he had reason to believe that we were suspected from evidence. To which I said, I knew nothing about who took it. He then asked me what was taken? I said, I believed it was lead off the roof one night, but did not think that any of *our* boys took it. He said, he had heard that the boys and girls were waiting at night after they came out of school, to go thieving. I said, I saw the girls of the night school only, waiting about after school, but did not know they went out thieving. He asked, where *I* went at night, and whether the boys enticed me to go thieving? I said, I went home to my father after school, but they would entice me to go to thieve if I kept their company—by this I meant the thieves in the neighbourhood, not the schoolboys. He said, good boys have been led away by bad ones, and asked if I knew one of the name of Tucker? I said, I knew Tucker, but said nothing about how he turned out—I did not say he had been a good boy, and bad boys made him worse. He said, he had been round at the prisons to hear accounts of us, and had heard that some of the boys had turned bad, and had been in prison and whipped. I *never* said that five or six went out together to thieve after school-time. *He* said this himself. My master was present when I answered the gentleman's questions, and heard all I said."

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"They would burst out into nigger songs at school, and would sing vulgar songs instead of the hymns."

"When the boys leave, they hollow, cat-call, swear, and make a great disturbance. Their language is most obscene."

"I don't see any improvement in the neighbourhood in going or returning on a Sunday evening. There is as much gambling, cursing, swearing, and mixing together of boys and girls as ever."

In giving the policeman's version of the subject, I must give both question and answer. The questions are those of your Correspondent; the answers those of the policeman.—"Do they sing?" "Yes."—"Have you not sometimes heard them sing songs while the hymns have been singing—such as nigger songs?" The answer was distinctly,—"*No;* I have never heard them do this."—"Don't they make a great noise when they leave the school, and swear and use bad language?" "They make a noise like boys always do when they leave school, but I never hear them swear or use very bad language."—"The neighbourhood is not much improved, is it? I suppose there is just as much swearing, cursing, and gambling, as ever—is there not?" "It is impossible for me to answer that, as I am only in the neighbourhood on a Sunday for about an hour and a half, or two hours; my *beat* is some distance from here."—"Are the boys and girls any better than they were?" "Yes."—"How do you know?" "Because a great many of them buy Bibles for themselves."—"But don't you think they buy them to sell again?" "No; because I see them bring the Bibles with them every Sunday evening; last Sunday I should think there were about five or six stopped to pay off Bibles." Here the policeman was interrupted by your Correspondent, who said: "Ah! Well—never mind that,—*We don't want to put that down.*"

All I have to say respecting the above statement is—that it was made by the policeman. It is either true or false. If true, it must form a sufficient reply to every questionable statement your Correspondent has made; and afford the clearest evidence, that the course he has pursued, and the misrepresentations he has made respecting Ragged Schools, have been such, as neither the force of prejudice, nor the influence of peculiar principles, could ever excuse. If, on the other hand, it is false, it may assist the public in ascertaining how far they can depend upon the "exterior" evidence he has furnished, and also show how fruitless has been his painstaking, in collecting it from such sources.

A boy is found in Tothill Fields Prison, who states that "he shouldn't have been a thief but for the Ragged Schools." As this is the only real case in proof which your Correspondent furnishes, I have been at considerable pains to ascertain how far it is correct. I have not depended, as he did, on the boy's own statements, but as he happens to be well known as a notorious thief, both in Knightsbridge and Westminster, I had no great difficulty in obtaining accurate information. The history of the boy may be summed up in few words—all of which, if doubted, I am prepared to prove. His father and mother were both drunkards. The schoolmaster of the Tothill Fields Prison lately found the mother lying in her own room, in a state of intoxication. The eldest son is at present in Coldbath Fields Prison. The next eldest your Correspondent found in Tothill Fields. A third and younger boy is living at present in a thieves' lodging-house, kept by a notoriously abandoned woman in Westminster. Here the other boy also lived before he was committed to Tothill Fields. He was once sent to a National School at Knightsbridge for six months, but did not attend more than one month in the six. About this time he joined "the Brass Band," (a notorious gang of young thieves,) with whom—after committing several robberies—he went to Chatham. There he was detected stealing, and committed to prison. *After he returned from Chatham*, he went for a very short time to Exeter Buildings Ragged School. The boy has now confessed the lie, and excuses himself by saying, that the gentleman asked if he did not learn to steal at the Ragged School; and supposing he would

give him something, or speak a good word for him to the governor, he said, "I shouldn't have been a thief but for the Ragged School—I know I shouldn't." I shall not enter further into the details furnished from the statements of those children. No one can read them without perceiving, that children could never have given such answers unless they had been *prompted* by leading questions. Even the poor girl who was examined seems to have been teazed with the most indelicate questions, until she is forced to blush, and with the view of getting rid of her unwelcome visitor, she proposes to call in her brother from the street to answer for her!

The zeal of your Correspondent in getting up a case against the Ragged Schools seems very much to have exceeded his prudence, or he would not have expected the public to believe, that the best information he could obtain was from the testimony of ragged boys—especially when asked—as was stated by one of their mothers: "If they had anything to say *against* the Ragged Schools." It were easy, on such testimony, to prove that all the schools and seminaries in London "were nurseries for criminals," especially as some of those who have even attended them may occasionally be found in prison.

I shall now add one word respecting the Industrial School in Westminster. That School is open to the public for inspection, and hundreds of noblemen and gentlemen who have visited it can testify, that there is no secrecy in regard to the mode of its operations, or the history of the children who attend it. Nothing is said by your Correspondent respecting the reformation of the children, nor am I aware that this formed part of the inquiry. It is statements "against" the School that are sought—as little as possible in favour of it. The testimony of two tradesmen are brought into the service, who complain bitterly against the poor children being taught to make or repair their own clothes, as they will grow up to be "sweaters" or slop workmen, and thereby "add to the poverty, and perhaps the crime, of the country." A very slight inquiry at some experienced person would have saved much of this trouble, and secured more correct information. It was never intended to make the boys tailors or shoemakers, except, in the case of those who have been regularly apprenticed to those trades—which, in every instance, is by indentures for a term of six or seven years. The simple object is to inculcate habits of industry, by means of which to remove the children's rags, and supply them with better clothing. It yet remains to be proved, that ever a single boy, who was taught tailoring or shoemaking at a Ragged School, became either a "sweater" or slop-worker. Those who emigrate to Australia, invariably go to the *Bush* as shepherds, and in such cases the ability to repair their own clothes will be extremely valuable.

I shall not trespass much further on your pages. By your Correspondent's own figures, I have shown that his statistical conclusions are erroneous. As to the *value* of the evidence he furnishes, to prove that children are led astray by attending Ragged Schools, I leave the public to judge. The greater portion of that evidence is mere theory, and the very questionable statements of a few ragged children. Not one of the policemen, or the other parties referred to, could instance a single case in proof. As I am prepared to prove that the history I have given of the boy in Tothill Fields Prison is correct, and that he was imprisoned for theft *before* he went to a Ragged School, we are, therefore, left without a single instance by which the charge can be substantiated. On the contrary, we have the testimony of sixty fathers and one hundred and thirty mothers of Ragged School children, who attended the meeting in Westminster, all raising their voices in favour of the benefits their children derived at the Schools; and not one could state a single instance they had ever known to

the contrary. Might not your Correspondent have obtained more correct information by assembling such meetings for himself? He did so on other occasions—why not on this? I am prepared to call other such meetings in any part of London where Schools have been established, and give him due notice to come and judge for himself, and put to the meeting what questions he pleases. If the testimony of those parents is not sufficient, I offer further—that for every case he can produce of a child having been led astray in the manner he describes, I produce *three reformed thieves*, and prove they have been reformed through the agency of Ragged Schools. I will not depend in either case on the mere statements of children, nor on the testimony of drunken mothers, who would rather see their children begging or stealing in the streets, than being educated at school.

Every one must know, who has ever been in a Ragged School, that it is impossible for children, when sitting in class, under the superintendence of their teachers, to corrupt each other in the manner your Correspondent has described. A slight acquaintance with the habits and condition of the children who swarm in the filthy courts and alleys of the metropolis, will soon show, that they require not to attend a Ragged School in order to get acquainted. They are acquainted from childhood; and that intimacy is generally increased at the gambling sweet-shops, the evening dances, and the penny theatres, before they come within the precincts of a Ragged School.

In conclusion, I may state, that these Schools are not perfect. We never said they were—nor could we expect them to be so, considering the brief period they have been in operation, the rough and peculiar material on which they operate, and the many obstacles against which they have to contend—obstacles that lie not within their power to remove. That they have done much good—we are prepared to prove. That they have done more harm—we are as ready to deny. We must look upon those who assail us as your Correspondent has done, as we would upon the infidel, who would deprive us of the Word of God. While we cling still more to the one as the charter of our hopes, we shall never shrink from the other as a means of blessing to the poor, so long as, in either case, our opponents merely seek to demolish what we have, and *leave us nothing in their stead.*

I am, Sir, your obedient Servant,

ALEXANDER ANDERSON.

Ragged School Union, 15, *Exeter Hall*,
April 16*th*, 1850.

It will be seen, that the chief object aimed at in the foregoing letter is to ascertain the value of those facts (?) on which Mr. Mayhew rests his conclusions. By such means only could his charges be properly met. It was not for us to prove that Ragged Schools had *not* increased the number of juvenile offenders, until we first ascertained whether there was any such increase. We are well aware how easy it is to form tables of statistics, so as to appear, with great plausibility, in support of any favourite theory; and what inaccurate barometers they often prove, in gauging the moral condition of a people. But so far as the morality of the juvenile population of the metropolis can be ascertained by such means—taking the statistics in their simplest form—it is evident, that during the five years succeeding the establishment of Ragged Schools, there was an average *decrease* for each year of six per cent. compared with that of the five years preceding. Hence, if the amount of injury inflicted on the community by Ragged Schools is in proportion to the increase of juvenile offenders since their establishment, it would appear that the so-named "thieves' houses of

call," are very harmless places notwithstanding. We are as fully convinced as ever that they tend to diminish crime, even in London, and that a very great increase in the number of juvenile offenders would have taken place, had it not been for their Christianizing influence. A marked decrease has occurred in almost every place where such schools have been nearly commensurate with the extent of the evil, as has been shown from the police returns in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Dumfries, and other places. That an opposite effect has resulted from those in London may be asserted, but it yet remains to be proved.

Not more insidious is the manner in which the statistics have been got up, than the nature of the second charge, and the means by which it is brought to bear against us. It is in vain for us to prove that the schools are doing good, by producing cases of decided reformation. This is granted. But here we are met with the sweeping assertion, that for every one child so benefited at a Ragged School, two are corrupted. Hence, "it is one of the most dangerous experiments ever attempted in hopes of doing good." Not quite so dangerous, in our opinion, as the unguarded and prejudiced statements of public men, who, rejecting proper sources of information, with a show of plausibility and an air of confidence, assail the institutions of the poor, with weapons formed from the garbled and incoherent statements extracted from their own lips. If the evidence our opponent has furnished proves anything at all, it proves his ignorance of the real nature of Ragged Schools, and of those children on whose testimony he places so much weight. We have shown that in some cases he has been deceived—we shall not say wilfully; in several others he has either suppressed almost every favourable statement, or represented the people as stating facts, or expressing opinions, which to us they have unhesitatingly denied. The contradictory statements we have received from the parties in question, are certainly entitled to equal credit with those of our opponent, even although we *may* have obtained them at a much cheaper rate.

That "evil communications corrupt good manners," even at a Ragged School, we were never disposed to deny—for we do not consider them superior, in this respect, to our higher schools and seminaries—but we do reject the assertion, as altogether unfounded, that the number of our juvenile offenders has thereby rapidly increased. That many children are lost through bad associations formed at the schools is said to be a fact "now admitted by the teachers themselves." We lately endeavoured to ascertain the truth of this statement, by collecting the results of the teachers' experience on the subject. A circular was sent to each of those schools that are open for the reception of youths—some are only for infants—containing a number of queries relating to the matter in question. We now give the results of such returns from 50 schools, at which, during the winter, there was an average attendance of at least 6,000 children. So far as the information could be obtained, there were 382 who had been once or oftener in prison previous to attending a Ragged School; 53 had been committed, for the first time, after they became scholars; 79, formerly in prison, had been re-committed; and only *five** instances were given, of which it could be said with any degree of *certainty*, that they had been led astray through bad associations when at school. So much for the "admissions" of the teachers; and, excepting the parents of the children, there is no man, or body of men in London, more capable of ascertaining. That others *may* have been led astray in the manner described is readily admitted, but such instances have not been known by

* Four of the above were destitute boys, and of doubtful character previously.

them, and, therefore, are not stated. They all agree in stating that the schools have had the opposite effect; that very many had been led to forsake their bad associates; but in few instances had evil connections been formed by well-behaved children.

With the view of ascertaining whether, in the prisons of London, many of the Ragged School victims could be found, we applied to the chaplains of several of the houses of correction. The testimonies of these gentlemen have been invariably in favour of Ragged Schools, and some of them regard the accusations of the *Morning Chronicle* as neither honourable nor just. One of these reverend gentlemen says:—

My dear Sir,—In reply to your queries, I beg to say, that I have never met with any boys in prison who ascribe their fall to association at Ragged Schools. I think that such a connection of cause and effect, as the writer in the *Morning Chronicle* has invented, has never been heard of since the Kentish pilot philosophically attributed the Goodwin sands to the steeple of Tenterden Church. But even that case is not quite parallel, for there were the two *facts* patent to the eye, whereas, in this case, all is pure—or impure—imagination. I have for a long time been surprised to find so *very few* boys in prison who have ever attended a Ragged School at all, or for any length of time. But it is obvious that the *Morning Chronicle* writer proves too much. If Ragged Schools are to be abandoned because of bad association, so must Parochial and National Schools, and Sunday Schools, nay, and even Boarding Schools, Academies, and Public Schools. And so, to avoid bad companions, children must be left without control to run the streets as they please! To such an absurdity does the matter come! The worst boy almost I ever had here, was an urchin now transported, who had been well taught in the Rev. Baptist Noel's School at St. John's, Bedford Row; and I have a youth here now, who always attributes his fall to the society of boys above him, in money, rank, etc., at a well-conducted boarding school. But, *unwittingly*, the *Morning Chronicle* writer is *right!* Mere education does not stop crime—it only changes its character. That has long been the assertion of those who have been the best acquainted with the subject, and the best friends of education. I congratulate you on the opposition; it will do you all a deal of good, and advance the great and holy cause you have at heart. Depend on it, all the good you do is so much *clear* gain; any incidental mischief that may be connected with the work is *not loss;* for it would have happened to at least as great a degree if you had never had a school at all.

I am, dear Sir, yours very truly,

* *

What say our opponents to this? It is the testimony of a "thoroughly practical man," whose daily experience must greatly assist him in forming correct opinions.

Another of these gentlemen says:—

"I look upon the labours of the Ragged School Union, as well as of Town and City Missions, in the hands of *really Christian persons*, as the most happily devised means of late years for the *prevention of crime* and wickedness in the land."

Another says:—

"We have had a number convicted or transported, who have attended Ragged Schools, but I see nothing in the broadest statements that can be made, to deter from striving to influence the dishonest portion of the community with the principles of Divine truth."

Another chaplain of one of the houses of correction says:—

"I handed your letter of the 18th inst. to our schoolmaster at the prison, who has drawn up the accompanying statement.

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call," are very harmless places notwithstanding. We are as fully convinced as ever that they tend to diminish crime, even in London, and that a very great increase in the number of juvenile offenders would have taken place, had it not been for their Christianizing influence. A marked decrease has occurred in almost every place where such schools have been nearly commensurate with the extent of the evil, as has been shown from the police returns in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Dumfries, and other places. That an opposite effect has resulted from those in London may be asserted, but it yet remains to be proved.

Not more insidious is the manner in which the statistics have been got up, than the nature of the second charge, and the means by which it is brought to bear against us. It is in vain for us to prove that the schools are doing good, by producing cases of decided reformation. This is granted. But here we are met with the sweeping assertion, that for every one child so benefited at a Ragged School, two are corrupted. Hence, "it is one of the most dangerous experiments ever attempted in hopes of doing good." Not quite so dangerous, in our opinion, as the unguarded and prejudiced statements of public men, who, rejecting proper sources of information, with a show of plausibility and an air of confidence, assail the institutions of the poor, with weapons formed from the garbled and incoherent statements extracted from their own lips. If the evidence our opponent has furnished proves anything at all, it proves his ignorance of the real nature of Ragged Schools, and of those children on whose testimony he places so much weight. We have shown that in some cases he has been deceived—we shall not say wilfully; in several others he has either suppressed almost every favourable statement, or represented the people as stating facts, or expressing opinions, which to us they have unhesitatingly denied. The contradictory statements we have received from the parties in question, are certainly entitled to equal credit with those of our opponent, even although we *may* have obtained them at a much cheaper rate.

That "evil communications corrupt good manners," even at a Ragged School, we were never disposed to deny—for we do not consider them superior, in this respect, to our higher schools and seminaries—but we do reject the assertion, as altogether unfounded, that the number of our juvenile offenders has thereby rapidly increased. That many children are lost through bad associations formed at the schools is said to be a fact "now admitted by the teachers themselves." We lately endeavoured to ascertain the truth of this statement, by collecting the results of the teachers' experience on the subject. A circular was sent to each of those schools that are open for the reception of youths—some are only for infants—containing a number of queries relating to the matter in question. We now give the results of such returns from 50 schools, at which, during the winter, there was an average attendance of at least 6,000 children. So far as the information could be obtained, there were 382 who had been once or oftener in prison previous to attending a Ragged School; 53 had been committed, for the first time, after they became scholars; 79, formerly in prison, had been re-committed; and only *five** instances were given, of which it could be said with any degree of *certainty*, that they had been led astray through bad associations when at school. So much for the "admissions" of the teachers; and, excepting the parents of the children, there is no man, or body of men in London, more capable of ascertaining. That others *may* have been led astray in the manner described is readily admitted, but such instances have not been known by

* Four of the above were destitute boys, and of doubtful character previously.

them, and, therefore, are not stated. They all agree in stating that the schools have had the opposite effect; that very many had been led to forsake their bad associates; but in few instances had evil connections been formed by well-behaved children.

With the view of ascertaining whether, in the prisons of London, many of the Ragged School victims could be found, we applied to the chaplains of several of the houses of correction. The testimonies of these gentlemen have been invariably in favour of Ragged Schools, and some of them regard the accusations of the *Morning Chronicle* as neither honourable nor just. One of these reverend gentlemen says:—

My dear Sir,—In reply to your queries, I beg to say, that I have never met with any boys in prison who ascribe their fall to association at Ragged Schools. I think that such a connection of cause and effect, as the writer in the *Morning Chronicle* has invented, has never been heard of since the Kentish pilot philosophically attributed the Goodwin sands to the steeple of Tenterden Church. But even that case is not quite parallel, for there were the two *facts* patent to the eye, whereas, in this case, all is pure—or impure—imagination. I have for a long time been surprised to find so *very few* boys in prison who have ever attended a Ragged School at all, or for any length of time. But it is obvious that the *Morning Chronicle* writer proves too much. If Ragged Schools are to be abandoned because of bad association, so must Parochial and National Schools, and Sunday Schools, nay, and even Boarding Schools, Academies, and Public Schools. And so, to avoid bad companions, children must be left without control to run the streets as they please! To such an absurdity does the matter come! The worst boy almost I ever had here, was an urchin now transported, who had been well taught in the Rev. Baptist Noel's School at St. John's, Bedford Row; and I have a youth here now, who always attributes his fall to the society of boys above him, in money, rank, etc., at a well-conducted boarding school. But, *unwittingly*, the *Morning Chronicle* writer is *right!* Mere education does not stop crime—it only changes its character. That has long been the assertion of those who have been the best acquainted with the subject, and the best friends of education. I congratulate you on the opposition; it will do you all a deal of good, and advance the great and holy cause you have at heart. Depend on it, all the good you do is so much *clear* gain; any incidental mischief that may be connected with the work is *not loss;* for it would have happened to at least as great a degree if you had never had a school at all.

I am, dear Sir, yours very truly,

* *

What say our opponents to this? It is the testimony of a "thoroughly practical man," whose daily experience must greatly assist him in forming correct opinions.

Another of these gentlemen says:—

"I look upon the labours of the Ragged School Union, as well as of Town and City Missions, in the hands of *really Christian persons*, as the most happily devised means of late years for the *prevention of crime* and wickedness in the land."

Another says:—

"We have had a number convicted or transported, who have attended Ragged Schools, but I see nothing in the broadest statements that can be made, to deter from striving to influence the dishonest portion of the community with the principles of Divine truth."

Another chaplain of one of the houses of correction says:—

"I handed your letter of the 18th inst. to our schoolmaster at the prison, who has drawn up the accompanying statement.

"I confess I was somewhat surprised at the inquiry, for I could not conceive that collecting together the ignorant and depraved for religious instruction could be a source of injury, and not an inestimable blessing.

"Some evil may result from the best institutions, and we must indeed go out of the world to avoid it, but no rational being can suppose that the efforts which we are desirous of using, in dependence on the blessing of God, for checking the sin and misery around us, will be the very means of increasing those evils."

The return above referred to has been evidently drawn up with great care, and may be considered accurate, so far as accuracy can be arrived at from the statements of young prisoners. The number of prisoners who had attended Ragged Schools is eighteen. They belonged to fifteen different schools, the names of which are given. The attendance of ten of those youths at school was from three weeks to three months, and the others varying from that to two years. The following statements were given by the prisoners, as to the good or bad effects they had experienced at the schools:—

"Was not tempted to do evil by any one, but heard and learnt what was good.

Ditto	ditto	but a little improved.
Ditto	ditto	What he heard was good.
Ditto	ditto	Was much to his advantage.
Ditto	ditto	Wished he had continued.
Ditto	ditto	Wishes he had taken the advice given him."

Such is the testimony of all the eighteen, with *one exception*, and this boy states that he "met with some bad lads, who enticed him to steal, and to stop out late at night; got his living before he went to the school by selling things in the street." By his own account, he attended the John Street School; and the teachers of this school state, in their return, that one of their boys had been led astray. Thus much for the harmony of both statements.

THE PARENTS' TESTIMONY.

In addition to the above evidence, we have the testimony of 450 parents of the ragged children, who attended meetings held in five different districts of London; parents, be it remembered, chiefly of that very class of children who are said to be led astray. Very great care was taken in every instance, to avoid making statements at such meetings as would bias the parents' minds in favour of the schools, or against those who assailed them. We had the privilege of attending several of the meetings, and never before were we so strongly convinced of the amount of real and permanent good that is being effected by the schools, both among the parents and the children. We can only afford space for a few of the statements given on those occasions, but what we have given is a true sample of all the others. The gratitude expressed by these poor, and, in many instances, poverty-stricken mothers, often with tears in their eyes, was sufficient to convince any one of the immense benefits conferred by the schools, and prove an ample reward for years of anxious labour in the good work.

PUBLIC MEETING IN WESTMINSTER.

A PUBLIC MEETING was held in the Lecture Room of the Working Man's Institute, Pear Street, Westminster, on Tuesday, April the 2nd, to take into consideration the disparaging statements recently made in the *Morning Chronicle* relative to the operation of Ragged Schools. No public intimation was given as to the precise object of the meeting, but in the course of the day a circular was sent round to many of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, of which the following is a copy:

"Pear Street School-room, April 1st, 1850.—You are respectfully invited to attend a meeting of parents to be held in the Lecture Room of the Working Man's Institute, on Tuesday Evening, April 2nd, at seven o'clock, when some important information will be given respecting your children."

A little after the hour, the room was crowded with men and women, anxiously waiting to hear what information was to be communicated. About 240 persons were present, consisting of 130 mothers, 60 fathers, and a few friends and teachers of the children.

Mr. Walker, a City Missionary, occupied the chair. He explained the object of the meeting, and said, it had been deemed expedient that the parents of poor children residing in the neighbourhood should themselves bear testimony to the truth or falsehood of the statements of the *Morning Chronicle*. He invited all who had any practical knowledge of the working of the Westminster Ragged Schools to state their opinions freely. The statements that he wished to have contradicted or substantiated were, that Ragged Schools were "nurseries for criminals," the vicious contaminating the innocent; and that they were not only "thieves' houses of refuge, but thieves' houses of call." The chairman especially invited the mothers present to state what they knew of the effects of Ragged Schools on their children.

Mrs. Cane said, she had two sons who had been several years at Pye Street School. One especially had received a great amount of good from attending; he was receiving a good education, and had been teaching his father and mother and two sisters to write. She was very thankful for the great kindness shown to her and her children. The Chairman had to visit her several times before she could summon resolution to send her children to the school; she was very glad, indeed, that she at last yielded, and so was their father. It was a great comfort to her that her children were so well protected and cared for.

Mrs. Carr (of Duck Lane) had had two children at the Westminster Ragged School. About seven months ago one of them went to America, and had since had it in his power to send her a sovereign—his first savings. (Hear, hear.) She was very happy to think that the gentlemen connected with the school had been so kind to her children, who were now fatherless. She was deeply thankful that they were looked after with so much tenderness and care, for it was not in her power to give them any education. The speaker handed the Chairman the letter she had received from her son, in which the sovereign was inclosed.

Mr. Bailey said, he had two boys at the school, and they had been greatly benefited. God bless you all, gentlemen, he continued; if I was worth £100, I would not grudge it for the boys to receive so much good as they have done.

Mr. Anderson, of the Ragged School Union, said, if any one present either knew or heard of their neighbours' children, or their own, who, from attending a Ragged School, had been led astray by other children worse than themselves, to state it plainly to the meeting—that what they wished to ascertain was—the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. This invitation was several times repeated in the course of the evening, but no such testimony was forthcoming.

Mrs. Webb was very grateful for the good her boy had received at the Ragged School. She could now (as never before) go to bed at night, and rise in the morning, and thank the Lord that her child was safe. Before, she was the unhappiest of mothers. Her boy had had the best advice and instruction given to him, and she hoped he would be able at some future time to make some return for the kindness that had been shown to him.

Mrs. Lodge had three children who attended the Ragged School, and it was a great consolation to her mind, and to her husband's, that they were permitted to do so. If they had been able to pay for their learning they could not be better educated than they now were. The children were neither thieves nor robbers, and were taught nothing but what was good.

The Chairman—They have not been led away by bad companions, have they?

Mrs. Lodge—Oh no, sir; but they would have been, perhaps, if they had not attended this school.

Sir Harry Verney, M.P., (who called unexpectedly at the Institute,) stated, that the object of those who convened the meeting was to elicit truth; and he hoped if anything could be brought forward against the schools it would be made public at once. Did they know of any children being led away into bad society by attending Ragged Schools? ("No, no;" "Certainly not," was the declaration of those present.)

Mrs. Owen had lived ten years in the neighbourhood, and had never heard of any such result; and she was convinced that the statement in the paper was entirely false. She had a great number of acquaintances in the neighbourhood, and she never heard any person say that their children had been led astray by attending the Ragged Schools.

Mr. Anthony O'Malley would not mind giving £100 to the school if he had it, in return for the benefit his boy had received from attending; and he hoped he should not die till he had assisted the school in some way.

Mrs. Burdy had two children at the Ragged School, who, otherwise, would have received no education at all.

Mrs. Davis said, three gentlemen called upon her lately, and asked her if she had any complaints to make against the Ragged School. She said, "No, I have not. My child goes there, and the governess sometimes gives her victuals and clothing. The teacher is a very nice man, and the governess is a very tender-hearted woman over the children. And I have nothing to say against the school." The gentlemen also talked to her little boy, who had likewise attended the school. They asked if he had anything to say against it. He said he had not. He said he was sorry the master had left, for he was a good one, and if he would return he would be glad to go to school again. They asked if he liked the school; and he said yes. He was also asked if there were any thieves in the school; he said there had been some, but they turned good.

Mr. Anderson read part of the Correspondent of the *Morning Chronicle's* account of the statement of this woman and her son, and Mrs. Davis affirmed that it was a most incorrect one. The gentlemen, she said, had asked her if there was any difference in the neighbourhood since the schools were established; and she told them that many a poor lad, who would have been half-starved but for the school, was now clothed, and fed, and educated; and she said no more than what was the truth.

Mrs. Smith narrated the case of a boy who was almost compelled by want to steal, who had been completely reformed by his attendance at the Ragged School. She was certain it was no upright man who had been writing these accounts in the papers.

Mrs. Skull said—I beg to say that some time ago two children were left on my hands; and thus a double duty fell upon me. How to educate them I knew not, until the Ragged School was established. It was not for food, it was not for clothing, that I wished them to be admitted, but for good learning. I have received an education myself; I have had to cope with poverty in its most severe forms; and I well know the consolation and comforts of education in the hours I have been striving hard for those children. Since they have been at school the precepts and morals that have been impressed upon their youthful minds—if they do not tell at present, they will, in after years, redound to the honour of the teachers who have come forward, and of the patrons of the institution. Ragged Schools are the greatest blessing in this locality. Well I considered Ragged Schools before I sent my children to them. I have now free access to all the schools in this locality; I have studied them well; and I see nothing in them that I can condemn. I am proud that my children were admitted to them. Long may Ragged Schools be England's boast. (Cheers.)

Mrs. Withers was grateful in every respect for the benefit that her children had derived from the Ragged School. Had it been established five years ago she should have one child among her number whom now she had not. He was gone away [transported]; the school was too late for him. She (Mrs. Withers) could now go out to her work, as she was accustomed to do, and know that her children were safe till eight o'clock at night. There was not a night that she did not give thanks to God for the benefits her children had received at school. Anybody who would speak against the school ought to be ashamed of himself. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. Grimes remembered when the building in which they were then met was a public-house; and he had witnessed in it the most revolting scenes. Latterly, however, a great change had been wrought in the neighbourhood, much of which he attributed to the influence of Ragged Schools.

Mrs. Owen said, that when a parent had a child who had gone astray, and

whom he was desirous to have reformed, he generally took him to the Ragged school. There were, no doubt, many obstinate and bad-tempered children in the schools, because it was such children that parents often sent there to get rid of their bad habits. She could speak to the great improvement of the neighbourhood of late years. She remembered when no respectable young woman could walk down Pear Street without being insulted.

Mr. Gagan had lived eighteen years in the neighbourhood, and remembered when the room in which they were met was in the possession of thieves, who used to meet and lecture in it. There was a great alteration now. His girl was getting a good education in that very place, and he was very thankful for it. He knew nearly all the children about the neighbourhood; and he knew of no instance of good children being contaminated by bad ones from attending the school. He wished such schools could be increased a thousand-fold.

Mr. J. Flynn could see the boys as they came from school, and had never seen them annoy or insult anybody. They merely larked and joked with each other; and he believed gentlemen at Oxford and Cambridge would do the same.

Mr. Biddle had lived in the locality twenty-two or twenty-three years, and could testify to the good effected by the schools that had been established. So great a change was there, that they could hardly see twenty boys or girls about Pye Street. He was sure that, if it had not been for the school in Pye Street, many a boy now there would have been at Botany Bay long ago.

The Chairman alluded to the statement of the *Chronicle*, that the improvement of the locality was owing solely to the pulling down of the old buildings. He stated, that those buildings were pulled down in 1849, while the improvement referred to commenced some time before.

Mr. Jones had two children in the Ragged School, where they were receiving a better education than that afforded even in the National School.

Mr. Anderson requested any mothers present who knew a contaminating influence being exercised on the minds of their children or those of their neighbours in Ragged Schools to hold up their hands; not one hand, however, was raised. After which, all having children in the schools held up their hands, as requested, as an indication that their children were receiving benefit from them.

Mrs. Sperway had a little girl who had been very much improved by attending only four months at the Pye Street School. She (Mrs. Sperway) lived exactly opposite the school, and could see all the manœuvres of the children; but she never saw any bad conduct exhibited by them.

Mrs. Lawford had reason to bless the day when the Ragged School was opened.

Mrs. Leonard had five young children who were being educated at the Ragged School, and who otherwise would have had no education at all. They had not been led away into bad company, but had been greatly benefited.

Mrs. Dagnall had a boy at school for several years, who was now a good scholar. His father had been transported; her sister had three children, who were never so happy as when at the Ragged School.

Mrs. Wormald bore testimony to the advantages her son had received at the Pye Street School. He was now in Australia. He had sent word that he hoped to be able to send something to England in support of the school.

Mary Allen, who lived opposite the school, considered it a great blessing to the locality, and she had never heard a contrary opinion expressed.

Mr. Smith testified to the improvement of the neighbourhood, as resulting from the establishment of the school.

Mr. Hilliard said, he had formerly seen gambling parties in the street, numbering as many as thirty persons, and has known as much as £3 staked at once. He had three girls at the Ragged School, and he knew of no contaminating influence exercised on them there.

MEETING AT RATCLIFF.

Another Meeting of Parents was held at Ratcliff, at which there were thirty-seven mothers and three fathers present. We can only afford space for a few of the statements given by the parents on that occasion.

J. E. S.—Boy has not derived great benefit in scholarship, but has been generally

improved in the school in behaviour, and has certainly got no harm in the school. Has greatly improved in work—no bad habits through coming.

M. R.—Girl has improved in behaviour, in learning, and in work. Has got a place, but still comes on Sunday. Boy has also improved in everything. Neither have contracted bad habits in the school.

A. C.—Her girls have very much improved indeed, both in little hymns and in prayers, and in needle-work, in morals generally, more particular in keeping their places clean, and very anxious to come to school regular—have got no bad habits from coming, but quite the reverse.

A. S.—Girl and boy have both much improved in school, both in work and moral duties; girl is ill, but is anxious to come as she is; both can say a great many hymns, which they have entirely learnt here; have got no harm here; have got good; have known how to behave themselves when they have got home; have improved greatly.

MEETING AT CLAPHAM SCHOOL.

At this Meeting Sixty Parents of Ragged School children were present. Subjoined is a few of their statements.

Mrs. Hall said, much good has been done by these schools, and I can prove it. The place has been much altered in consequence. My boy has received no harm, but much good. Since the school was opened, there has been scarcely a single boy taken up by the police from this neighbourhood, which was a very common thing before.

Mrs. Boyce said, my boy often comes here, and I have reason to bless the name of the school for his sake. He comes here and is well clothed, instead of running about the streets in rags. My girls also attend. The schools have done more good than anything else I have known in Clapham, and I have lived here more than sixteen years. I have seen far more improvement among all ages in this place in the last four years than in all the previous time.

Mrs. Merritt.—I am very glad my daughter has come here. She has learnt reading, writing, and plain work. I have lived in the place eight years. It had a very bad character when I came; there was much gambling. It is now quite a *paradise in comparison.*

Mrs. Honnells.—I have reason to bless the day the school was opened. My girl has been very much improved in it. She always tells me what she has learnt when she comes home. I do not think there is any contamination of one child by another; in fact, I think my child has received much good from other children.

Mrs. Verrall.—The school has been very useful to my children, and to myself too. I have four who attend, and sometimes five. There is no contamination. They behave better both at home and here.

The Chairman said, all they had heard had been in favour of the Ragged Schools; but could no one point to one instance of harm having been done by the school? (Loud and general cries of "No; no; nothing but good.")

Mrs. Evans.—The place has never been in so good a state as since the school was established. I wish it had been much earlier.

Mrs. Bush said, though her husband had spoken, she could not leave without bearing her testimony to the good her husband and children had received from the school. She knew that the general opinion of the neighbours was decidedly in favour of it.

The Chairman asked, if any one present had heard any of their neighbours, who were now absent, blame the school as having been the cause of mischief in any instance. (Loud cries of "No." "Not at all." "We talk together about it, and so know that we agree.")

MEETING AT KING'S CROSS SCHOOL.

This Meeting was attended by Fourteen Parents, who all related the benefits their children derived from the Ragged School. We have only space for one or two of their statements:—

Mrs. James.—Has two children in school. Better morals a great deal than before. Boy before he was in the school had a very insolent temper. Sure he is

better now. It keeps him away from bad characters; far better than being in the streets wandering about.

Mrs. Grandy.—Has one girl and a boy at school. Like industrial school very much. Sure they have derived benefit; confident of it; don't think they have received any evil impressions; not any at all.

Frederick Davis.—One boy in the school; attended two years; very sure he has derived much benefit; a very different boy from what he formerly was; when the boy was away he was not exactly the thing, but has been very much improved; thoroughly persuaded that no evil has been done to him.

The parents, afterwards rising in a body, expressed their gratitude for the attention and care bestowed upon their children, declaring in a most decided manner, that they had never known any instance in which a well-behaved child had been led astray by attending school.

MEETING AT GREENWICH AND DEPTFORD.

This Meeting consisted of parents whose children attended the Greenwich and Deptford Schools. We regret that we cannot find space for more than a very brief record of the proceedings. A more interesting meeting it has seldom been our privilege to attend. About 160 parents were present—bench after bench was closely filled with mothers, some with infants in their arms, others with children on their knees—many of them evidently in great poverty—and all anxious to know the object for which they had assembled. This once stated, so general was the feeling in favour of the schools, that all seemed anxious to give their testimony at once. Seven or eight mothers rose simultaneously, and commenced speaking at the same time. One and all had a similar tale to tell—improved homes, improved children, improved neighbourhoods, and gratitude unbounded, was expressed for the blessings conferred upon themselves and children. The testimony of one poor father was peculiarly affecting; he rose under strong emotion, which he strove hard to suppress, and exclaimed, "No one can have more reason to speak well of the school than I have. I have two children there; before they went I could not live with them for oaths and curses, and all manner of wickedness; *but instead of cursing me now they come home and sing me hymns.*"—Here his feelings quite overcame him, his lips quivered, his eyes filled with tears, and he was forced to sit down without uttering another word.

No stronger testimony can be given or desired, to refute the malicious charges brought against the schools, than the simple and affecting statements of these grateful parents. None can better know whether honest children are contaminated at the school than the parents of such children. They have been called to give evidence, and the above is part of their impartial testimony. We leave our readers to judge, whether the evidence of these parents is not more to be credited than the random *opinions* of those who have been summoned to testify against us. The voices of four hundred mothers—and they could be multiplied sevenfold—speak more loudly and powerfully of the good we are doing, than all the individual cases that have been mustered against us, even if those cases had been true.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

In addition to the simple and convincing statements of the parents of ragged children, we are enabled to present our readers with the opinions of a most influential and respectable portion of the London press. They are from the pens of gentlemen whose political and ecclesiastical sentiments are, in many cases, widely different, but who are quite as conversant with public and local affairs as

the Correspondent of the *Morning Chronicle*, or the "experienced gentlemen" whose testimony he has given:—

Another case, and another law, which might be exceptional to national freedom, are those of the education of the juvenile poor. In the utter neglect of this most to be commiserated portion of the metropolitan population, charitable men undertook to do all in their power to remedy some of the worst results of destitution. They opened *Ragged Schools*, where the rising generation of outcasts were enticed, in order to learn that there were other occupations, aims, ideas, other modes of living in the world, and other modes of pride, than dexterity in thieving. Of the immense good wrought by these schools, no rational or impartial person can have a doubt. An ingenious person has succeeded, by setting the *esprit de corps* of the police against that of the charitable educationists, to get up a case against the Ragged Schools; and the individual testimony of urchins is pressed into the service, as if it were not easy to demonstrate that all the schools in England were hot-beds of vice, if any one were ingenious enough to collect and collate the evidence of malicious school-boys. That the acquisition of some elements of learning, that even the momentary submission to the discipline of a school, the contact with their betters, and the vistas open towards the comparative repose and happiness of a virtuous and intelligent life—that these have had their effect in a thousand instances, none can deny. But that they sometimes fail—that boys who used to herd for evil purposes in idle resorts may do the same in Ragged Schools—and that the horn-book is not alone a specific for vice—must and may be admitted, without in the least affecting the great value and noble uses of these Ragged Schools. How valueless the number of police committals are as testimonies against Ragged Schools, the article which follows this in our columns abundantly shows.* —*Daily News.*

NEXT to judicious praise and encouragement, there is nothing that persons engaged in undertakings of great public utility have more to desire, than unfounded censure. The cloud of witnesses who came forward at the late meeting in Pear Street to bear testimony in behalf of the efficacy of the Ragged School in that district for good, in contradiction to the disparaging statements in the *Morning Chronicle*, go far to corroborate this view. They were reported in our yesterday's publication, and deserve the most serious attention.

At the meeting referred to, fathers and mothers rose one after another to declare how deeply they were indebted to the Ragged School, to heap prayers and blessings on the heads of those who originated and supported it, and to express their earnest wishes that their circumstances could have enabled them to contribute to its maintenance and extension. One poor woman told, with a mother's pride, how her boy, educated at the school, had gone to America, and had remitted her "a sovereign—his first savings." Another, with a sigh remarked, that "had the Ragged School been established five years ago, she would have one child among her number whom she now had not. He had gone away, (transported)—the school was too late for him." Another expressed her gratitude for the good her boy had received at the Ragged School: "she could now (as never before) go to bed at night and rise in the morning, and thank the Lord that her child was safe." A man, who had two boys at the school in Pear Street, exclaimed, "God bless you all, gentlemen! If I was worth £100, I would not grudge it for the boys to receive so much good as they have done." Another "hoped he should not die till he had assisted the school in some way." The good that is acquired by the children at the school is in some instances communicated by them to their parents. Mention was made of a boy who had been educated at the Pear Street School, and was teaching his father and mother and two sisters to write. There were many testimonies to the general improvement of the vicinity since the Ragged School was opened in Pear Street. The neighbourhood is now decent and orderly; some years ago, no

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* We have been obliged to omit the article referred to for want of room. It will appear in our next.

respectable young woman could walk there without being insulted; thirty persons might be seen gambling in the street, and as much as £3 staked at once; in the very room where the meeting was held, thieves were wont to meet, and teach the secrets of their profession.

The statements made at the Pear Street meeting illustrate admirably, not only the effects of Ragged Schools, but the mode in which they are produced. In our densely peopled towns there has been, and is, a class left outside of the pale of civilization, beyond the reach of its softening and strengthening influences. Children whose parents are too poor to send them to school, too much engrossed in the pursuits by which they earn a scanty and precarious subsistence to keep an eye upon them, are left exposed to all contaminating influences. The unhappy creatures grow up without having any maxims instilled into them for the guidance of their conduct—the natural affections are stunted in the nipping air of poverty. They see the actions and hear the conversation of the dishonest; and sometimes, by the mere instinct of imitation, follow their example. Were they to seek for reception into any of the seminaries which existed before Ragged Schools were instituted, their squalid and tattered raiment and equivocal characters would insure their being refused admittance. These outcasts by the road-side, destitute of "wedding garments," have been invited by the founders of Ragged Schools to sit down at a table where food is provided both for their intellectual and moral nature. No one was rejected, however uncouth his appearance, however gross his ignorance, however equivocal his character. They have learned to love instruction; the better principles which remained dormant within them have been awakened; they have been induced to try to become useful members of society. In some instances, the example of the child trying to better itself has shamed dissolute and reckless parents into emulating its example. The whole poverty-stricken class of a neighbourhood, witnessing the good effects of these schools, have become their warm partizans, and take an honest pride in being so. The schools have become a rallying point for the good; they are the source and object of a purifying and ennobling public spirit. They have created bodies of citizens, in the highest and best sense of the term.

It may be fearlessly admitted that these schools have not been in every instance successful. What is said about children being brought into contact with thieves at them may indeed be disregarded. They were brought into such contact before the schools existed, and without their counteracting influence. But we admit that many a pupil may have felt a momentary desire, awakened in the schools, to become an honest and industrious man, subside and die out under the recurrence of bad habits, or the influence of bad companions. We can easily imagine young reprobates availing themselves of the knowledge acquired in the schools to attain to greater dexterity in wickedness. Such exceptional cases, the consequences of naturally weak or perverse characters, are not unknown among the *élèves* of higher seminaries, or even among Christian communities that exercise a rigid discipline over their members. A large allowance may be made for such relapses, and yet the better spirit breathed into a whole class, the number of individual "brands snatched from the burning," remain sufficient to vindicate the sagacious humanity of those who projected the Ragged Schools. In this, as in everything, "Wisdom is justified of her children."

The general tone and tendency of those papers in the *Morning Chronicle*, of which the disparaging statements regarding Ragged Schools form a part, convince us that these statements are merely the result of inadvertence. The writer has taken too hasty and superficial a view of the class to be dealt with, and the manner in which the schools deal with them. The main object of the schools has been to awaken the torpid germs of goodness which lurk in the breasts of all. They are the first missionaries sent into the field; their work is preliminary; they are meant to prepare the way for something better. During the brief period for which the schools have been in existence, it would have been as much as could have reasonably been expected had they only inspired the destitute classes, among whom crime elbows indifference, with a conviction that they might become something better, and, with intermittent desires to realize the aspiration. Time is necessary to the growth of those habits, which alone can make an orderly and decorous class.

But the witnesses at the Pear Street meeting, (and similar testimonies might be gathered from any district in which a Ragged School has been in active operation for a year or two,) proved that more has been done than to awaken vague longings after improvement; that many have been reclaimed—many kept from falling. The fallacious nature of the inferences drawn from the Report, showing an increase in the annual number of persons taken into custody within the district of the metropolitan police during the last three years, was exposed by us on Saturday last. The number of committals for trial has diminished in a much larger ratio than the number of arrests has increased.—*Daily News, April 5th.*

The *Morning Chronicle* employed its parliamentary recess—for a daily newspaper has almost as much to do with the recess as the Speaker himself—in publishing a series of "Letters on the Poor," by what it is now the fashion to call "our own commissioners." The letters themselves showed considerable talent, and that practice of composition which betrayed the habitudes of their authors with the London press.

Now, it is quite evident to everybody that an autumn tour through England, or even through London, by men utterly without previous knowledge of the poor beyond what is known by the world in general, is not sufficient of itself to qualify for an authority on such a subject. Those best acquainted with the poor are constantly mistaking them; the most complete experience barely enables the acute observer to know the hidden feelings of hearts at once uncertain and callous, or the secret springs of reckless and precarious action. The mode of expression—the symptoms of happiness or misery—are all peculiar, and require long practice ere they can be well interpreted. A man who, in the course of an autumn, shall attempt to read the hieroglyphics of the poor, will find in the end that he has read every line wrong.

More than this, the letters in question were, in reality, a mere mercantile speculation. They were simply destined to attract notice to a paper rather put to its shifts, under actual circumstances to secure any peculiar feature. What the paper wanted was piquant and startling facts. It would not have thanked its correspondents for letting it know that the population was improving; that its condition was rather out of sorts sometimes, but that many influences were at work to ameliorate it. The every-day description of the life of an ordinary labourer or workman has nothing in it of any definite interest. This sort of thing would not pay. So the commissioners were instructed to peer into the holes and corners of poverty, and to fetch from thence the most marketable facts. A filthy den or a ruined cottage was the attraction, as a matter of course; the great mass of ordinary dwellings were passed by as unsuited for the purpose. The facts published, though often coloured, were doubtless true; but the real state of the poor was about as accurately known as if a showman were to import half a dozen goitred idiots from the closest recesses of the Alps, and cry aloud to the world, "Such is the Swiss nation." We would undertake to send out commissioners to any class of society—lawyers, merchants, newspaper editors themselves—and they would bring out in time things which would astonish the world. And yet the race of mortals comprising these classes live, in general, an ordinary life enough.

However, no mischief was done by these letters, as society has no superabundant sympathy for the poor, and the exciting of a little more was not altogether a useless effect. The constant cry of wolf might perhaps do harm with those who examine for themselves, but these are not many. But one communication fell foul, rather injudiciously, of Ragged Schools. They were stigmatised as nurseries of crime, and houses of call for thieves. This is part of the system. Unfortunately, the means of exposing it, in this case, were somewhat too near at hand. A Meeting was held at Westminster, on Tuesday, to consider this statement. It was an open meeting, convened by circular, sent to all the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. The parents who have children at Ragged Schools were invited to give their opinions freely. Here are some of them:—[Here follows a Report of the Meeting of Parents in Westminster, to which is added,]—These are convincing statements; we should only weaken them by further observation.—*Atlas.*

It is much to be regretted that a contemporary, which has recently been directing its attention to the condition of the labouring classes, should have written anything calculated to damage, in public estimation, one of the most valuable institutions of our age and country. We have never had a voluntary society so well calculated to meet the condition of the lowest and most neglected classes as the Ragged Schools, which are rapidly increasing in numbers, and gaining a great increase of popular favour. The improvements which they have produced in the character of those who were the outcasts of society, have so recently been brought into public notice as to render it unnecessary that we should now employ any arguments in their favour. They are at the present time telling in a most powerful and satisfactory manner on the lowest classes of the juvenile population of London, and the promise they afford of an extensive reformation is of the most cheering description.

These are the institutions which a well-known writer in the paper referred to has ventured to describe as "nurseries for criminals," or "thieves' houses of refuge and thieves' houses of call." If the object of this writer were simply to state, that the Ragged Schools receive within their walls a number who have been addicted to the practice of thieving, and that this practice is not abandoned by them as soon as they enter the school, he would say no more than than that which might be said without detriment to these institutions, and indeed rather in their praise. If these assertions mean more than this, we believe that the impression which it gives is really false: if it intend no more, then it conveys a truism which it is unnecessary for a moment to deny.

A most admirable means has, however, been employed for the purpose of refuting the assertions which have been made respecting the deteriorating influences alleged to have been exerted by one class of the pupils on the minds of those who were comparatively free from contamination. A Public Meeting was held at the Working Men's Institute, Pear Street, Westminster, on Tuesday Evening, for the purpose of taking these prejudicial statements into consideration. That meeting was attended by persons who were most likely to form a correct judgment as to the truth or falsehood of the statements which have been recently circulated—these persons being the parents and friends of young people who have lately been, and we believe still are, receiving the education which the Ragged Schools afford. A large number of these persons, principally the mothers of the children, gave the result of their observation, and the nature of their statements is of the most gratifying description. * * * *

One of the many persons who gave in their statements feelingly observed, that had the school been established five years earlier, she should have had one child in her number more than she had. After such valuable testimonials as these, to which hundreds more might be added, and to which still further might be added the honest opinion of the public, it is needless to enter on a confutation of the unjust and prejudicial statement to which we have referred. We are, ourselves, the advocates of the fullest discussion of the character of all our public institutions, but we must deprecate the utterance of unfair and injurious assertions, the tendency of which is to destroy the influence of an institution formed for a class for whose improvement no other adequate means have ever been devised. We are almost inclined, in conclusion, to adopt the good wish with which Mrs. Skull concluded her own remarks—"Long may Ragged Schools be England's boast."—*Morning Advertiser.*

We are not surprised that in many cases the instructions imparted in the Ragged School have been attended with the same fatuity that accompanies the education of Harrow, Eton, or Oxford. We have known, in both cases, the best teachers and plans fail in reforming the refractory; but the instances of failure are only exceptions to the beneficial generality of the law of teaching. We know some families, and we may even say localities, that have been greatly ameliorated by the Ragged School, and we are perfectly assured that improvement, more or less, must attend all right-hearted, and even mercenary instruction, however defective in its range, or in the mode of its communication. We were, therefore, surprised to see

that the *Morning Chronicle* has seriously commenced a crusade against the whole system of Ragged Schools, gravely accusing them of increasing the evil—juvenile delinquency—which they were specifically designed to repress. We can imagine many philosophical objections to these institutions on various grounds; but we are at a loss to comprehend how our contemporary can seriously propose to account for the increase of juvenile crime, by imagining that the instructions given in these schools increase the facilities for the vicious practices of the young culprits. As to the array of statistical figures, illustrative of the increase of juvenile delinquencies, in proportion to that of Ragged Schools, we consider them only sufficiently ingenious to colour a hoax on the credulity of the public; for we cannot believe that our shrewd contemporary can really intend to inculpate these institutions on evidence so utterly inadequate to the proof. Granting the figures of our contemporary, the testimony of a retired policeman, and that of two or three young scoundrels in prison, with a poor woman, the mother of a shirtless child—all their force—they prove, indeed, that Ragged Schools, like every other, are places of temptation, and that the worst children make a bad use of their advantages; but they do not prove the point for which they were produced—that juvenile criminals increase in the ratio of ragged pupils. We admit that these facts forcibly illustrate the old proverb that—

"A little knowledge is a dangerous thing;"

But if it be so at all, it is so everywhere, and in all classes, and not only in the schools of mendicity. It is obviously our duty, therefore, to increase the little to enough.

We agree with our contemporary, that ignorance is not the only, perhaps not the main cause of crime; but we are sure, also, that knowledge is generally the cause, and always the concomitant, of virtue; and that, *per se*, intelligence rarely leads to criminality. The records of criminal law have long since completed the demonstration, in every civilized country, that ignorance and want occasion, especially in young offenders, by far the majority of cases of violation of the law. Let any one glance at the Fifth Report of the National Philanthropic Association, or at any other volumes intended to describe the outcast sections of the metropolitan family, whence these ragged urchins daily issue to their petty warfare with property and order, and he will see sufficient causation in their dens of wretchedness and infamy, which are the only homes to the wrecked inmates that rankle there, to account for all the crimes their wild progeny inflict on society. When these pitiable creatures emerge from their cloacine abodes, they are forced into strong contrast with all the forms of property and the comforts it distributes. Without instruction or moral feelings, it is more probable that they will steal, than endeavour to rise by industrial competition. Youth is everywhere thoughtless, and copies with rapidity the examples by which it is surrounded; and, whether clothed with rags or the brilliant gossamers of fashion, it is the same, and emulates the feats of its more daring cronies, or improves upon the sagacious thrift of its criminal seniors. These considerations, applied to the law of all evil that waxes worse by continuance, are quite sufficient to account for the growth of juvenile criminals. Shame to the government of Christian and wealthy England, that tolerates the existence in its capital of such obscene hordes as were never heard of in the cities of antiquity or of mediæval nations! Never had nation so complicated and expensive an apparatus as Great Britain, for the detection and punishment of her criminals. But what will the future Niebuhrs and Lamartines say of her policy, as they record 500 years hence, that 100,000 vagabonds were allowed to fester in dank holes in the heart of London, where rats, fever, and stench, combined with hunger, and all the crimes but cannibalism, to infuriate our felon-breeders with the reckless energy of despair?

As to the specific value of the statistical figures of the *Morning Chronicle*, we conceive the utmost merit that can be allowed them, is to consider them another ingenious illustration of the frequent fallacy *cum hoc propter hoc;* for more they can never pass, since they have not a whit better claim to be regarded as proofs than the declaration of a country cousin of ours the other day, who maintained that England had been falling ever since apple-dumplings on a Sunday went out of fashion. Our contemporary might, with equal truth, have shown that the increase

of juvenile delinquency had kept pace with the increase of railway traffic, or with the sale of Banbury cakes, or the new discovery of apricot lozenges, or with the use of the magnetic telegraph; and there would have been this advantage in these comparisons—that they are facts. Many things have a co-existence, and preserve a marvellous ratio in their increments, and yet have not the remotest connection as cause and effect; and this, we are convinced, is the predicament of the accidental co-increase of juvenile rogueries and Ragged Schools.—*Christian Times.*

Because juvenile delinquents still crowd our prisons, and juvenile vagrants still throng every corner of our thoroughfares, there has been a question raised as to the efficacy of one of the most practically excellent of the benevolent undertakings of modern days. We have so often commended the excellence and set forth the claims of Ragged Schools, that it is unnecessary to dwell upon their peculiar merits now. Those merits have been almost universally admitted, yet, on a recent investigation of the actual condition of the juvenile population of the metropolis, so degraded have been the characters, and so pitiable the spectacles revealed, that the inefficiency, or rather the insufficiency, of Ragged Schools has been (some assert) made painfully apparent. Nevertheless, before we decide upon the success or the non-success of any undertaking, it is only fair to inquire what we were justified in expecting from it. If any sanguine enthusiasts anticipated that Ragged Schools, alone and unaided, save by the exertions of individuals, were to regenerate a community whose wretchedness and precocious iniquity have almost passed into a proverb, then, indeed, we may admit that these institutions have failed in accomplishing their object. If, on the other hand, we rightly estimate their true position—if we conceive them to be (as indeed they are) hospitals for the morally sick and destitute, receptacles for the hapless foundlings that society casts from her bosom to perish, in hundreds and thousands, by the wayside—then, on the contrary, we shall agree that, so far from proving inefficient, Ragged Schools have not only accomplished much, but they have accomplished much that other hands have left undone. While, however, we take this opportunity of again bearing testimony to their excellence—while we again remind the rich and the charitable, that their alms and their assistance cannot be better bestowed than in furthering the efforts of these literal pioneers of civilization—we would also again enforce the truth which, with all our confidence in the good effects of Ragged Schools, we have never lost sight of, namely, that the very existence of such institutions, while it attests individual charity, is a national disgrace. Silently, but not the less eloquently, these scanty, poorly-furnished buildings, with their voluntary teachers, and scholars whose "ragged" habiliments are a less pitiable sight than the obvious misery of their physical, mental, and moral condition—children with none of the happiness and little of the innocence of children—children with frames stunted by hunger and covered with filth, a ready prey to the first attacks of disease—children whose hearts are ignorant of the first rudiments of real knowledge, yet whose hands are perhaps skilful in the intricate mysteries of theft—silently and eloquently do these scenes cry shame upon the legislature under whose sway they exist. We repeat it, Ragged Schools are a disgrace to the nation. We are about to call together men of all countries to witness our artistic skill, and to receive proof of our national magnificence and magnanimity. Whatever the reality of 1851 may be, it is not difficult for imagination to conjure up a gorgeous spectacle, wherein the wealth of England and the enterprise of Englishmen will be splendidly conspicuous. Let us imagine, however, some stranger from another world, dazzled by the glory of the "show," asking, like King Arthur on a similar occasion, to see the "substance?"

"Where stands the People?—Genius, lift the blind."

What sort of an exhibition for the eyes of all nations would a close scrutiny of London afford? To return to the subject of these remarks—one only, but one of the most important of the many crying wants of the community—Education, we are yet in expectation of some Ministerial effort in its behalf. In this case, more than any other, we may say, *bis dat qui cito dat*; for in this case delay is death. The public have observed with pleasure, that by her Majesty's desire the name of

the Prince of Wales has been placed upon the list of patrons of many of the principal public charities. *Has the young prince given a donation to the Ragged Schools of London? In no place would the name of youthful royalty be so appropriately inscribed.—Sun.*

TESTIMONY OF A POLICE OFFICER.

In the Second Letter on Ragged Schools, which appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*, an account is given by a "Superintendent of Police, who had lately retired, and who had 'served,' principally, for many years in the Westminster district." Although very little is said by him in opposition to Ragged Schools, yet much less is stated in their favour. We are now able to lay before our readers a most valuable and interesting statement, *written by that officer*, which refers to the interview he had with Mr. Mayhew, and in which he also states his opinion, based upon the experience of *nineteen* years' service, in one of the most criminal parts of the metropolis. We trust our readers will weigh carefully those statements—they are written by a man of experience and intelligence, and, we believe, a man of piety. Doubtless, had such a document been originally furnished, it would never have found its way into the *Morning Chronicle*. It affords another proof to what we have already expressed—that every statement in favour of the Schools *has either been given in the most doubtful manner possible, or altogether suppressed.* Those who have read Mr. Mayhew's account, said to be given by this officer, can now judge for themselves.

A few days ago, two gentlemen called on me, to ask my opinion of the operation of the Ragged Schools, and whether I found, during my experience as a police-officer, those schools had done any good amongst the class of juvenile offenders, or were not rather an evil, by bringing a large number of young thieves together, so that they had opportunities of planning robberies, and encouraging each other in a deeper course of crime. The gentlemen told me, that it was a fact, that the number of juvenile thieves had largely increased since the institution of the Ragged Schools, and by the official returns this was clearly shown to be the case. They said, they were collecting information, and that they had been referred to me, as a person able to give information on the subject, and they only wished to arrive at the truth. They also said, they had obtained the opinions of various persons, who all stated that the Ragged Schools had done much to increase the number of juvenile offenders, by their assembling such numbers of them together.

I found that these gentlemen were of that opinion also; they said they came to that conclusion from the facts which they found in the official returns, and the many opinions they had obtained, and they asked me what was my experience on the subject.

I confessed I was much surprised to hear such statements—not that the number had increased, but that this increase was attributed to the Ragged Schools. However, on being asked a direct question, as to whether I knew personally of any good done by the Ragged Schools amongst the class of juvenile offenders in Westminster, I answered without hesitation, that I did; but the means to support Ragged Schools were quite inadequate to meet the immense evil that surrounded them in the low parts of Westminster, so that, in the midst of such a population, the good would appear to the eye of a person merely passing through some streets to be very small, if not denied altogether; but I could testify that, in my long experience, I always found, that whenever an individual or a number of persons set about a good work, with good motives, they always succeeded in doing some good, according to the means employed, although it might be but small, yet it never failed entirely.

I was asked, if I could point out any person or circumstance to confirm my opinion of the good I had spoken of. I replied, that the nature of the duty of a police-officer did not enter into the circumstances of the Ragged Schools; my time was wholly occupied in the performance of the duty assigned me, without meddling

with any other matter whatever; consequently, I did not make any note or memorandum of what I did, however, clearly see; but I could assure them I could testify that much good had been done by the Ragged Schools. I added, that in my experience as a police-officer for nineteen years, I must have seen much evil in such a place; and also see, and be glad to see, any appearance of good being done, of the smallest kind, or by whatever means, and it was altogether impossible for this to escape my notice; and if, in this case, but little was done when compared with the amount of evil to be combated, it was because the means were small, and not because the institution of Ragged Schools was bad in itself.

I was asked, how could good result from the congregation together of so many bad characters; and that, if even there were any boys of good character attending these schools, would not the bad boys corrupt them? I replied, that this was applicable to all schools where children were assembled in large numbers. But the evil in this case was not when in the school, but want of observation of the children on leaving school daily for their food, or at the closing hour; and I entered at some length into this part of the subject, showing the result of my observations of the conduct of children in the streets on leaving school; and I said, they should be carefully watched on their way home, especially until they separated on their way, for every one knew that children were glad to have liberty after being shut up for several hours in school, and sometimes their play led to quarrels, or other bad conduct, therefore I considered that the master of a school failed in his duty, if he left the children to do as they pleased on leaving school; and I mentioned a circumstance which occurred some years ago in the Broad Sanctuary, (the National Schools,) as confirmatory of my opinion, and I could truly say, that the conduct of the boys attending the Ragged Schools was not worse than that of boys attending other schools, and certainly much better in the streets after attending the Ragged schools than it had been previously, when many of them had been a terror to the inhabitants, and a source of trouble to the police.

I was asked, could I account for the large increase in the number of juvenile thieves, especially since the formation of the Ragged Schools. I replied, first, that I did not believe the Ragged Schools were the cause of the increase; but as I had left the police service in 1848, perhaps a portion of the increase had arisen since then; the gentlemen said, No, the increase alluded to was previous to 1848, and they had not seen the returns up to a later period.

I then said, there are several circumstances that contribute their share in producing an increase of juvenile thieves, and it was not owing to one cause alone. One cause, however, was, the increase of population, especially of the lower class; and another chief cause is, the lenient manner in which all thieves are treated when in prison; indeed, it may be truly said, that all the sympathy now is for the thief, and none whatever for the parties who have been robbed; and was it likely that boys, ill-fed, if fed at all, and without any means whatever to obtain either food or clothing—seeing, as I know they do see, persons older than themselves, who being thieves, yet are well-fed and clothed, perhaps also keeping more than one girl, prostitutes, to assist them, and share in the plunder they obtain—and numbers of these adult thieves may be seen daily standing at the corners of streets, lanes, or courts, without fear or shame, talking over their exploits, and how well they fared in the prisons—I ask, was it not almost a certainty, that a boy hearing their conversation, and seeing their outward condition, would also become a thief? I have known many instances of this, and occasions when boys have exclaimed, "*Oh! I wish I was a man.*" This was significant enough of what they probably would be, when they became men; and I have lived long enough to see the wishes of many boys realized, and I have known many more instances of mere children becoming thieves at a very early age.

I told the gentlemen, that the poor children had no chance whatever of being anything else than thieves or prostitutes—the very element they breathed was noxious, and saturated with crimes of the most revolting kind; and many children became thieves as soon as they could speak, and be allowed to walk out alone; the first crime they commit is, stealing some trifling article from their mother, such as the key of the room door, or any small article whatever, and this was soon sold in

one of the numerous little general dealers' shops which abound in all poor localities, and are ever open and ready to give a half-penny or a penny for these little articles; and this they will do, although they know the children have stolen it. This is one of the most minute but dangerous seeds of evil, and who can be surprised to see the fruit of the grown-up plant? All such shops should be placed under a most stringent law. I will not trouble you with details, but until something is done to nip this evil in the bud, it will grow, and has already, and will continue to produce bitter fruit. Yes, and a more stringent law is required for the pawnbrokers also; the temptation at present is too great. The little sweet shops are a serious evil; they keep instruments of various names, to induce children to try a game of chance for the articles they sell; it is so contrived, that the child may win something to induce a repetition; this bad system leads boys to gamble, and finally ruins many a youth; and as Sunday is the most busy day for this species of corruption, can it be a wonder that the children soon become disposed and ready for every evil work?

In adverting to the imputation on the Ragged Schools, of being the cause of the increase of juvenile thieves, I stated, amongst other things, that *the more experience the police had, the more thieves were apprehended*; and that it was found that boys are less in fear of the police than adult thieves are, and will endeavour to make an appearance of being innocent better than their elders; and a boy will venture to steal, where the adult thief is more cautious to avoid detection.

But, I said, can it be believed, that amongst the number of the almost destitute children who attend these schools, (all voluntarily,) there are any so foolish as to choose the school as a place of meeting others, to consult how they could accomplish robberies? Surely these children, (many of whom I know to be wise enough in their own way,) when roaming the streets in groups, and seeing the passing events, frequently in some degree causing excitement, and affording facilities for executing their bad designs, would think this the most likely time and place for communication with each other on such subjects, and not in the school, where close observation and good advice are in constant operation. There can be no doubt that even churches and chapels are used as places of assignation for immoral purposes, but this makes nothing against places of worship—so neither is it true, that the Ragged Schools are the places where young thieves meet purposely to concoct their evil designs, although it may be true that there have been instances of association and connection formed in Ragged Schools between boys, just as these connections are formed in other schools. *I think these poor outcasts should have some credit for their motives in going to the Ragged Schools*, and that possibly some of them may be induced to do so, with the hope of obtaining a little education, as a means of getting a livelihood in some future time. Ah! who can tell what the pinchings of hunger, cold, and want of clothing are, except those miserable beings, and such as those, for whom the Ragged Schools were mercifully opened. The only thing, in my opinion, to be lamented in the case of Ragged Schools is, the want of sufficient means to carry out the intentions of the Christian men who originated these schools. Many years ago, I thought I foresaw what would be the consequence of the neglecting the crowds of children infesting the streets; and when gentlemen and others made inquiries, or opportunities were afforded me, I did express my fears of what would follow continued neglect. On many occasions, I have known children to be turned out by their unnatural parents, and ordered not to come in again unless they brought something with them. I have also known parents to live entirely, and frequently get drunk, on the wages of the prostitution of their daughters; and I have also known of crimes even more revolting than the above—crimes too filthy to be named.

Knowing all this, I have often wondered how the great majority of the nation could sleep in security, for most assuredly, whilst they slept, the enemy was engaged in sowing tares extensively. And now, when happily a few Christians are awake, yet their little army is too small to cope with that which is opposed to them—however, under no circumstances, should their hands be weakened, and their good be evil spoken of. What was the curse denounced against Meroz? not because he had done something he should not have done, but merely because he did nothing. May this consideration arouse many to come and help!

I was asked, what I thought of the state of education, especially as to the effects on the young being able to read and write only. I replied, that certainly reading

and writing were exceedingly necessary and good, but yet, without moral and religious training, it became an evil, and led many a youth to crime. I have known many who could read and write well, but had no moral training or help in addition, to become very expert thieves. They could read and fluently quote from numerous infidel works published daily, and also kindred Sunday newspapers; could comment on the speeches of council in the courts of law, especially on the speeches for the defence of criminals; and, as far as this went, such youths were clever, and many were able to defend themselves when before the magistrates; but on all subjects of a moral nature they were quite ignorant; and, of course, this defective system of education has also helped to increase the number of juvenile thieves.

But there are many other causes for the increase of the number of thieves, amongst which the beer-shops hold a prominent place in the catalogue of evils at work. Previous to the passing of the Beer Bill, if the son of a small farmer, or a farm-servant, wished to go to a public-house at night, perhaps there was no house nearer than a mile or two, or more, then they would forego the pleasure rather than take the journey after a hard day's work; but now, for some years past, the beer-shops are so multiplied in the country, as well as in the town, that it may be said, there is one almost next door; the consequence of this is most appalling in demoralizing the youth of the country. The above is a fact communicated to me by many young men who were brought up in the country, and subsequently joined the police service; it has also been found by the police, that in almost every case of robbery, the plan has been concocted in a beer-shop, and in various ways these dens of vice have been auxiliary to thieves. It is very well to say, these beer-shops are an accommodation to the lower classes; I grant this, and that a working man can obtain his beer more easily, when to be used at his house with his family, or to carry into the field or place of working—but no beer should be allowed to be drunk in any of the beer-shops by their customers.

As a proof of the evils caused by the beer-shops in the country, I can state that, previous to the Beer Act being passed, when young men joined the police service, I found them ignorant, but not vicious; but, within a few years afterwards, when the effects of the beer-shops operated, then most of the young men who joined the police service, although they were still ignorant, were, in addition to this, as vicious as the same class of young men brought up in town, but more vulgar. This consequence I especially marked as being decisive that the beer-shops are an evil. Many coffee-shops are not much better on many points, by giving facilities to thieves and prostitutes at late hours, when working men do not require refreshment. The only difference is, that coffee does not intoxicate to crime. The numerous little penny theatres, or such places as go under that name, contribute to the increase of young thieves and prostitutes. I have known many cases of youths of both sexes, ruined by what they see and hear, and the connections they form in such places. Can this be matter of surprise to any person who has taken the trouble to see and hear for themselves, and also to see that the beer-shop or the gin-shop is the place where most of the young persons go into after leaving the theatre, and also some to the brothels. The evils consequent on attendance at the theatres are large and extensive in corrupting youth, but the subject is too large for me to enter on at present. * * *

A reply is promised to our Letter, which appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* on the 22nd April; but, as time will not allow us to wait for its appearance, we may have to return to the subject in our next Number. In the meantime, we can assure our readers that the friends of Ragged Schools have nothing to fear. Charges so monstrous as those which Mr. Mayhew has brought against us, can only be believed by those who *wish* them to be true—especially in the face of the numerous and weighty testimonies which we have given. Had he propounded a *more excellent method*, we would have gladly adopted it; but he has not attempted to do so; and if he had, it might have proved as unpalatable to the people of England as the Ragged Schools are to him.

We vainly look around us for a more successful method. Coercive measures have been tried, and failed; political reforms and agitations have been tried, and also failed; *Communism* has already been tried, and that has failed too; and every method must fail, unless it can quicken the conscience, and purify the heart.